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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 711th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Thursday, 31 May 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Initial report of Côte d'Ivoire (CRC/C/8/Add.41; CRC/C/Q/COT/1; written replies of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to the questions in the list of issues (document without a symbol distributed in the meeting room in English and French))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Côte d'Ivoire took places at the Committee table.

2. Ms. LAGOU (Côte d'Ivoire) said that her country's report had been produced by State bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), national experts, children's representatives and the media, as well as religious and community leaders, and technical assistance had also been received from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Côte d'Ivoire had experienced unprecedented socio-political unrest in recent years, which had had a devastating effect on its economic and financial stability. The Gross Domestic Product had fallen by 3 per cent in 2000 and over a third of the population lived under the poverty line. The cost of servicing foreign debt had risen steeply from $1.2 billion in 1997 to $2 billion in 1998. Recent events had meant that it had not yet been possible to implement the Government's plans to combat poverty. Although her country did not yet benefit from the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC), designed to reduce the burden of foreign debt, her Government had been negotiating with major donors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the European Union with a view to seeking foreign assistance.

3. In the context of poverty and unrest, infant and child mortality rates had risen in the previous five years, with acute respiratory infections and malaria representing the main threats to life in the under-five age group. Between one in four and one in five children of that age suffered from growth or weight deficiencies. The population had poor access to health care, and the low levels of literacy and schooling, particularly among women, also contributed to the ill health of young children. The Government's major concerns were the high child mortality rate, the large number of children infected by HIV/AIDS and the increasing number of child victims of sexual or economic exploitation.

4. Over the previous decade, considerable progress had been made in Côte d'Ivoire to strengthen the legal framework for the protection of children. In particular, the new Constitution of August 2000 gave children special protection under article 6, reiterated the ban on the use of the death penalty and certain harmful traditional practices (arts. 2 and 3) and guaranteed the right to asylum for refugees (art. 12). Côte d'Ivoire had ratified most international human rights instruments, and had signed a bilateral agreement with Mali in September 2000 to combat the trafficking of children between the two countries. Draft laws were under consideration to ratify the International Labour Organization Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. A UNICEF report had indicated that most domestic legislation was consistent with the Convention, but that it was poorly implemented and largely unknown to the population as a whole. Her Government was therefore pursuing efforts to disseminate information about legislation on the rights of the child.

5. Efforts were under way to correct the serious deficiencies in the health care infrastructure in particular with a view to tackling regional disparities. Specific health care objectives for mothers and children were reflected in vaccination, anti-malaria, nutritional, anti-AIDS and school health programmes. The emphasis on enlarging the scope of vaccination programmes had led to a 50 per cent reduction in the proportion of non-vaccinated children between the years 1994 and 1999. Breastfeeding was on the increase, and sanitation and drinking water had reached almost 82 per cent of the population in 2000, compared to 63 per cent in 1990.

6. A national plan of action to develop primary education had led to positive results by 2000. The enrolment rate in schools had risen by 10 per cent in the previous decade, and the literacy rate had risen by 7 per cent. Nevertheless, women remained largely illiterate.

7. According to data from 1998, over 14 per cent of children between the ages of 6 and 14 were in paid employment, and the national child protection policy had been designed to combat economic exploitation. The Employment Code established regulations for children's working hours and conditions, and prohibited night or dangerous work. Penalties were applicable for failure to respect those rules. In practice, however, many children continued to work due to the poverty of their families and deficiencies in the education and social welfare systems. Child trafficking was a growing phenomenon in Côte d'Ivoire. Young girls were transported from rural communities to the cities for domestic work, and children were brought into the country from neighbouring States. A number of steps had been taken to curb those trends, including the adoption of specific laws, her country's participation at a regional conference on the development of effective strategies to combat trafficking in children for commercial exploitation and the signing of a bilateral agreement with Mali.

8. A government ministry had been created to deal with AIDS-related issues, and a national programme had been followed since 1987 to combat the disease. Nevertheless, activities to assist AIDS orphans were still limited in scope, and the Government had established a think-tank to develop more effective strategies to cope with the problem. Various private and public bodies were involved in a scheme to combat the rising phenomenon of street children. Centres had been established to provide care and to assist in reintegrating children into society.

9. There were a number of obstacles to the effective implementation of the Convention. Among the most important were the deterioration in the exchange rate, the slump in sales of essential products, the burden of servicing foreign debt, the continued existence of traditional practices that were damaging to the health and welfare of the child, the poverty of households, the limited participation of women and children in decision-making, rapid urbanization and demographic growth. The Government was concentrating its efforts on improving health care for mothers and children, as well as social welfare provision for the population as a whole, providing compulsory schooling free of charge to children under 16 years of age, and affording better protection to children in situations of particular difficulty, such as the victims of HIV/AIDS, trafficking and prostitution.

10. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee was aware of the difficult circumstances hindering effective implementation of the Convention in Côte d'Ivoire. He welcomed the frank account of the country's major problems provided in the report and oral introduction. It was very encouraging to note that the Convention took precedence over national law, and that steps

had been taken to harmonize domestic legislation with the Convention, for instance with regard to the abolition of the death penalty However, according to the report by UNICEF in 1999, the majority of people were still unaware of the existence of such legislation, and that was particularly important given the strength of customary law. Resistance to national law was especially strong in relation to child labour, female genital mutilation and discrimination against girls and disabled children. He asked whether any specific measures had been considered or taken to ensure effective implementation of the law.

11. He noted with satisfaction that a Ministry for the Family, Women and Children had been established to coordinate activities relating to implementation of the Convention, and asked precisely what coordinating activities had been planned. He asked whether children could file complaints to the newly-established National Human Rights Commission, and how easy it was for them to do so. For instance, had a free telephone number been set up to receive complaints?

12. Ms. OUEDRAOGO asked how the Government intended to raise awareness of national laws that reflected the provisions of the Convention. She would be interested to learn which problems were preventing implementation of the law. More efforts appeared to be needed to bring about a change in attitudes. The delegation should provide further details of the national plan of action for the survival, protection and development of children, as well as an account of whether similar problems of implementation had been encountered.

13. She welcomed the numerous activities being planned to disseminate the Convention, which would include an assessment of efforts to date, to be carried out in conjunction with UNICEF and asked when that review would take place. While plans had been made to teach the principles of the Convention in schools, would professionals and traditional and religious leaders receive similar training?

14. She asked for more details concerning the project to establish a national monitoring body which would enhance the effective implementation of the rights of the child. More information should also be provided on the bilateral agreement with Mali. In particular, article 5 provided for cooperation between national authorities to identify traffickers and the children involved, but were there also provisions to ensure that once children had been identified and repatriated, they would not be caught up again in other trafficking networks? How did the Government intend to punish traffickers to deter them from reoffending?

15. Ms. SARDENBERG commended Côte d'Ivoire for its high-level, multisectoral delegation, which demonstrated the State party's commitment to a holistic approach to the implementation of the Convention. She wondered, first of all, what factors had delayed the formulation of the report, and why the State party had not yet ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. She was impressed by the innovative laws that had been formulated to complement existing legislation, and would welcome further information on the bilateral agreement between Côte d'Ivoire and Mali to fight cross-border child trafficking.

16. The written replies presented an interesting analysis of the social taboos related to children, but also discussed the erosion of positive traditional social values. Further clarifications would be welcome, in particular with regard to any social and cultural practices that hindered the implementation of the Convention. In addition, it would be useful to know

how the Ministry responsible for the implementation of the Convention coordinated its work with that of other bodies, in particular the recently-established department within the Ministry of Justice. Finally, she wondered whether the plan of action that had concluded in 2000 had resulted from the World Summit for Children; whether the Government had envisaged renewing that plan and what preparations were being made for the United Nations General Assembly special session on children, to be held in September 2001.

17. Ms. AL-THANI, observing that efforts to publicize the Convention in Côte d'Ivoire had been sporadic and unfocused, inquired whether the Government had taken any steps to establish a more regular and structured dissemination method. She would like to know whether there was a difference in the marriage age for boys and girls, and if so, why; what were the legal ages for compulsory education and whether the Government envisaged raising the minimum age for criminal responsibility.

18. Ms. CHUTIKUL said she wondered why the implementation of the Convention was encountering resistance, since, according to paragraph 57 of the report, children were highly valued in Ivorian society. Paragraph 71 listed child-related domestic laws, and went on to state that although some such laws were applied, others were not because the population was unaware of them. In that regard, she would like to know what measures the Government had taken to inform law enforcement personnel and legal professionals of their existence.

19. More information would be welcome on the bilateral cooperation agreement between Côte d'Ivoire and Mali on cross-border child trafficking. By what process had the agreement been formulated? It would be helpful to know whether it treated the full scope of the problem, from prevention to social reintegration.

20. Mr. CITARELLA noted that the Committee was aware of the economic, social and political circumstances that hampered the full and integrated implementation of the Convention in Côte d'Ivoire. The State party had nonetheless made great efforts to bring its laws and customs into conformity with the provisions of that instrument. He had been pleased to learn that the problem of AIDS was being handled by the office of the Prime Minister, and inquired what measures had been taken and what had been their impact. He noted, however, that no laws were on the books regarding either paedophilia or the traffic in children, and inquired what had prevented Côte d'Ivoire from ratifying the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

21. He observed that the Civil Code set the age of majority at 21, that the Criminal Code set the age of full criminal responsibility at 18, and that the minimum age of criminal responsibility was 10, and pointed out that the State party should harmonize those provisions and bring them into conformity with the Convention.

22. Finally, the report made no mention of the age for school enrolment or the minimum working age.

23. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ commended the Government for establishing clear areas of priority for children's rights. The report stated that 40 per cent of the annual budget was allocated to education. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report 2000 indicated that in the late 1990s, budgetary allocations for education had stood at 5 per cent. What was the reason for the discrepancy between those figures? She would also like to know what portion of the budget went to health and social welfare services. If she understood correctly, the social security system had been expanded, but did not cover the total population. It was unclear, however, whether Côte d'Ivoire had a social welfare system that provided benefits and assistance to families.

24. In addition, she would like to know whether Côte d'Ivoire had benefited from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, a programme which required an increased budgetary allocation to the social sector, and whether it had increased its expenditures accordingly. She commended the State party for conducting a survey of household expenditures. The growth rate had been -3 per cent in 2001, a disturbingly low figure: what was the estimated growth rate for 2001? It would also be useful to know whether the impact of the low growth rate on the implementation of child-related legislation had been assessed.

25. She would like to know whether the Government had evaluated the cost of the various reforms it envisaged, in the areas of health, social security, education, the traffic in children, prostitution and AIDS, and how it planned to budget such measures on a long-term basis. A general description of the budget would be useful, in order to compare expenditures in the various sectors. Finally, she was pleased to note that the State party was normalizing its relations with donors.

26. Mr. AL-SHEDDI requested more information on plans to establish a national monitoring body to oversee the implementation of the Convention, in particular with regard to its mandate and tasks.

27. Ms. KARP observed that Côte d'Ivoire was one of the few countries to have introduced the notion of children's rights into the national constitution. The Ivorian Constitution, however, referred to protection and provision of care, but not to the important matter of participation. The Convention posited that children were entitled to rights and must be participants in matters affecting them. It also envisaged the child as a human being with human rights. In that regard, she would like to know what real recourse existed for children when their rights were violated, and how the remedy provided under the National Human Rights Commission, mentioned in the written replies, worked in practice. The State party should provide examples of cases in which the Convention, or related provisions in the Constitution, had been invoked before the courts, and describe their outcome and impact. It would be useful to know whether, and to what extent, the new constitutional principles affected the daily life of children.

28. She inquired what measures, if any, the State party was taking to coordinate the work of NGOs in the areas of protection and provision of care, and whether it had envisaged working with NGOs on the question of child participation. In general, Côte d'Ivoire should consider developing an integrated, holistic approach to the implementation of the Convention, taking into consideration the contribution of NGOs.

29. Noting that the Convention had not yet been incorporated into school curricula, she inquired whether the Government had contemplated requesting technical assistance from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the purpose of enhancing the treatment of human rights and children's rights in educational programmes.

30. Finally, she inquired whether Côte d'Ivoire had a minimum age of consent to sexual relations, and if not, how it protected children from sexual abuse.

31. Ms. OUEDRAOGO, noting the reference in the written replies to the recent establishment by decree of the National Human Rights Commission, asked to what extent children's rights were taken into consideration by that body. Was the Commission able to receive complaints concerning violations of children's rights? Were there plans to establish an office of the children's ombudsman?

32. She asked how the communication plan referred to in paragraph 59 of the report was implemented. Did the Government intend to draw up a children's code that would reflect the principles set out in the Convention and would bring together all laws relating to the child? The plans to make education compulsory until the age of 16 appeared to be at variance with the minimum age of employment, which was still 14.

33. The emancipation procedure referred to in the report apparently conflicted with the Convention, as it deprived the child of some measure of protection. A national law imposed severe penalties on persons who facilitated the use of drugs by minors or the use of children for drug trafficking. To what extent was that law enforced, and what kinds of sanctions were applied to children who were involved in drug abuse or drug trafficking?

The meeting was suspended at 11.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.50 a.m.

34. Ms. LAGOU (Côte d'Ivoire) said that since the military coup d'état of December 1999, the country had undergone a difficult period of political and social upheaval, which had included loss of life and property following the presidential elections of October 2000. The new civilian Government had made efforts to re-establish civilian rule at the municipal and regional levels, establish new institutions, restore relations with donors and ensure the effective protection of the rights of all citizens, including children. The Government was conscious of the need to demonstrate to the international community that Côte d'Ivoire was a State based on the rule of law.

35. In 1998 UNICEF had drawn the attention of the Government to the problem of trafficking in foreign children, who were being brought to Côte d'Ivoire for agricultural work and were subjected to ill-treatment. It was quickly ascertained that the majority of the children came from Mali, and the Governments of the two countries had therefore concluded an agreement to take measures to halt the trafficking. For its part, Côte d'Ivoire was to tighten its border controls, identify Malian children already engaged in work and hand them over to the Malian authorities, who would place them in a special reception centre and return them to their families.

36. More recently, the problem of trafficking in child workers appeared to be spreading. In the past two weeks, the Government had intercepted groups of children who had been smuggled into the country from Burkina Faso and Guinea and had arrested the smugglers.

37. The Government was undertaking awareness campaigns and offering legal assistance in an attempt to overcome popular resistance to implementation of the Convention and to make the people aware of its importance. It would like to translate the Convention and related enactments into local languages so as to work with tribal and religious leaders and increase the effectiveness of such campaigns. Resistance concerning certain entrenched social practices such as excision was particularly difficult to overcome, and would require a long-term effort emphasizing the right to physical integrity. However, there had recently been some encouraging signs, and she was confident that under the new civilian Government the country would be able to implement the Convention.

38. Mr. BEKE DASSYS (Côte d'Ivoire) said that Côte d'Ivoire had indeed ratified a large number of human rights instruments; equally important was the fact that the new head of State had taken many concrete steps to promote human rights. In just six months, the Government had set up a Directorate for Human Rights and Public Freedoms within the Ministry of Justice, had established an inter-ministerial commission for the drafting of reports on human rights and had responded to a request from the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions by inviting her to visit the country. The Government was cooperating with a United Nations fact-finding commission looking into the events of October 2000, and had recently decided to ratify the two main international labour conventions addressing the problem of child labour.

39. Ms. BAROAN LIKAGNENE (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the Government had already submitted a bill to Parliament for the ratification of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which meant that the country would soon have ratified all the major international instruments relating to children's rights. The age for political eligibility had been lowered to 18 years by the Constitution adopted in 2000, and the domestic legislation would soon be amended to set the age of civil and criminal majority at 18 as well. The Government was obliged to amend certain aspects of its domestic legislation to bring it into conformity with the Convention, which took precedence over domestic law. In so doing it would harmonize the ages of criminal responsibility.

40. Under the new Constitution, the role of the Constitutional Council had been extended, and NGOs were now able to bring cases of violations of human rights directly before that body. The Labour Code, which set the minimum working age at 14 years, dated back to 1964, and would be amended to increase the limit to 16 years when the age of compulsory schooling was raised. Emancipation related to persons who had been married as minors, and was aimed at permitting them to carry out certain legal acts on an equal footing with adults. An emancipated child was not, however, entitled to carry out all the acts of an adult, and still required a guardian for certain matters. Decisions concerning the scope of an emancipated child's freedoms were made on the basis of the best interests of the child.

41. Complaints of violations of children's rights could be filed with the National Human Rights Commission, and NGOs were entitled to submit cases to the Constitutional Council. While children were considered to have full entitlement to their human rights, until they reached the age of majority they were not considered under Ivorian law to be able to accomplish all acts or make all decisions, and therefore required the support of their parents or guardians.

42. In Ivorian legislation, the task of raising awareness was not unique to the Convention. Although there were plans to translate the Convention into local languages, the Government did not have the resources required to do so. On the other hand, it trained journalists who worked in local languages to spread knowledge of the rights of the child through the media, and information was also disseminated through legal clinics.

43. Mr. KOUAKOU KOFFI (Côte d'Ivoire) said that one of the distinguishing characteristics of the new Constitution was the emphasis it placed on the protection of vulnerable groups such as children, women, the elderly and the disabled. While the Constitution had long been part of the school curriculum devoted to civil and moral education, the Government was aware that it had to do more. Lawyers and other professionals were therefore invited to provide legal aid free of charge for children. The Convention was reflected in court judgements in cases where it was invoked.

44. Studies had shown that the public viewed existing legislation as alien norms that had been imposed on Ivorian society. To persuade people that the law was home-grown, dissemination campaigns had focused on the rights and duties of children within the family and society.

45. Under the 1975 educational reform, education had been made compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 16, a measure that had met with resistance because of the failure of parents to understand the purpose of schooling. The provision concerning compulsory education had therefore been dropped from Act No. 95-696 of 1995, which had been adopted following consultations with the general public. However, the Government gave high priority to the goal of raising the school-leaving age to 16.

46. A number of bills designed to bring domestic legislation into conformity with the Convention were currently before Parliament. They addressed issues such as paedophilia, child trafficking and the protection of child AIDS victims. Emphasis was placed in that context on traditional social values such as solidarity and mutual assistance.

47. Ms. CISSE SAVANE DROUHO (Côte d'Ivoire) said that workshops had been held in late 2000 to assess the impact of the national plan of action adopted in 1992 for the survival, protection and development of Ivorian children. It was noted in the resulting report that some indicators such as infant mortality rates had actually deteriorated. The main constraints identified were the poor quality of social services, the debt burden, poverty and illiteracy. Most programmes were implemented vertically rather than horizontally, with little community participation and inadequate coordination. As a result, the goals set had not been attained. A new action plan based on a clear order of priorities would be prepared in the light of the results of the United Nations General Assembly special session on children.

48. Ms. BAROAN LIKAGNENE (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the age of consent for sexual relationships and the statutory age of marriage was the age of majority, which would shortly be lowered from 21 to 18. The discriminatory provision that a girl could marry at the age of 18 with parental consent and a boy only at the age of 20 would thus no longer apply in the future.

49. Mr. KOUAKOU KOFFI (Côte d'Ivoire) said that the minimum age for access to alcohol, cigarettes and drugs was the age of majority but it had proved difficult to apply the law in practice because of the influence of certain multinational corporations.

50. The involvement of NGOs in children's issues took various forms, including public awareness campaigns, especially to promote school enrolment for girls. NGO action had initially been somewhat uncoordinated, but the establishment of an NGO forum had led to greater synergy. The Government strongly supported the NGOs, which had close contacts with local communities, and relied on them, in particular, for dissemination of information about the Convention.

51. Mr. SALAI-BOUAH KOFFI KONAN (Côte d'Ivoire) stressed the difficulty of drawing up a budget in a developing country with a heavy debt burden and in which two commodities with widely fluctuating prices - coffee and cocoa - accounted for 45 per cent of export income. The State budget had increased slowly but steadily over the period from 1992 to 1999. The funds allocated to education accounted for about 20 per cent of the budget. The figure of 40 per cent mentioned earlier referred to social expenditure, which included spending on health, subsidies to vulnerable persons and the funding of organizations engaged in social welfare activities. However, more than 60 per cent of the social budget was allocated to education and about 45 per cent of the education budget was allocated to primary education.

52. The CHAIRPERSON, commending the fact that the Government had set priorities for the future, asked whether it had also made provision in the budget for their funding.

53. He wished to know whether the authorities had investigated the reasons for the disappointing results of the birth registration campaign supported by UNICEF in 1998 and whether any further campaigns were being considered.

54. He inquired about the impact of the 1999 campaign against female genital mutilation. Were the authorities satisfied with the outcome?

55. Mention was made in paragraph 117 of the possibility of establishing police brigades for minors. He asked whether the brigades were operational and, if so, whether they had been introduced in both urban and rural areas. The same paragraph of the report referred to a maximum period of detention in police custody of 48 hours for minors and to the need for lawyers to be present at the preliminary investigation. It was unclear whether those principles were already applied in practice. If they were, how was the system organized and funded?

56. He asked whether the principle of Ivoirité ("Ivorianness") interfered with or restricted the right to nationality.

57. Ms. Al-THANI noted that the Government had issued a decree in 1998 protecting children with disabilities. It appeared, however, that such children were still discriminated against for cultural reasons. There had even been reports of infanticide. She asked whether the decree covered such areas as the right to education, employment and a decent standard of living.

58. She understood that a major student organization - the Féderation estudiantine de la Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI) - was under a three-year ban. Were there any plans to lift the ban in the near future? It had been alleged that student members of FESCI and other groups who were in trouble with the law had in some cases been subjected to torture or ill-treatment. What action was being taken to prevent such practices?

59. Ms. OUEDRAOGO welcomed the agreement between the Governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Mali to combat trafficking in children. She hoped that similar agreements would be concluded with other countries and carried into effect.

60. She asked how the Government proposed to tackle the problems of coordination and grass-roots involvement in implementing the plan of action.

61. She suggested that the procedure for registration of births should be reviewed. Any delay in registration, for example, involved the parents in a complex and costly process that served as a disincentive.

62. According to paragraph 108 of the report, the national commission for the supervision of youth publications planned under Act No. 91-1033 of 31 December 1991 had never been established. She urged the authorities to remedy the omission. According to paragraph 109, children's access to sound information was made difficult by the lack of specialized publications, the lack of control over audio-visual productions and the proliferation of video clubs. She would add to that list the unregulated importation of videocassettes targeted at young people. The Government should take regulatory action in that area.

63. She wished to hear more about the Children's Parliament mentioned in paragraph 111, for example the extent to which it represented the different regions and children in employment or otherwise uncovered by the education system, the degree of autonomy it enjoyed, how it operated and how it was funded. What steps were taken to ensure that the adults who supervised the Parliament did not exert undue pressure on the children and how were the parliamentarians' concerns and decisions taken into account?

64. Ms. CHUTIKUL inquired about the relationship between the Government and the mass media, particularly with respect to the protection of children against press abuse. She wondered whether the idea of supervising youth publications implied placing restrictions on their freedom of expression.

65. The high repetition rate in education was a waste of resources. How did the authorities plan to deal with the problem? She also noted that over 60 per cent of the education budget went towards payment of salaries, while only 6 per cent was allocated to operational activities.

66. Ms. KARP asked for details of the cases in which the Convention had been invoked in legal proceedings. In particular, she wished to know how the Convention had been reflected in the judgements handed down.

67. She noted some ambivalence on the part of the authorities towards the rights-based approach to children. It seemed that adults were systematically involved as assistants where children wished to file complaints. Were the adults in question trained to represent the children's views and what happened where there was a conflict between a child's perception of his or her best interests and that of the child's representative or parents?

68. Corporal punishment was prohibited by law only when it constituted abuse or injured the child. She asked whether corporal punishment was acceptable in schools, day-care centres and other institutions, and whether the authorities would consider mounting a campaign or introducing legislation to outlaw such punishment entirely.

69. She wished to know whether persons under the age of majority who had sexual relationships were in practice subject to prosecution. If they were, it raised questions about society's ability to protect children against genuine abuse.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.